

AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS

Claim 1 (original): A gaming system comprising:

means configured to establish a trail comprised of a succession of trail elements of which at least one or more are associated with a prize, progression from one element to another along said trail being dependent upon the completion of tasks by a punter in the course of playing a game;

means for determining, at the outset of a said game, the trail element to which the punter could progress in the course of playing the game; and

means for controlling the provision of tasks for completion by the punter in the course of the game, said controlling means being configured to ensure that the punter is not provided with a number of tasks that, if completed, would enable the punter to progress to a trail element beyond that which the punter has been predetermined by said determining means to attain.

Claim 2 (original): A system according to Claim 1, wherein said establishing means is configured to sub-divide said trail into groups of one or more trail elements.

Claim 3 (original): A system according to Claim 2, wherein said groups of elements comprise at least one group which is not associated with a prize, and one or more prize winning groups that are each associated with a prize.

Claim 4 (original): A system according to Claim 3, comprising a plurality of prize winning groups, wherein successive prize winning groups are associated with a prize that is more valuable than the prize associated with a preceding prize winning group.

Claim 5 (original): A system according to Claim 4, further comprising a jackpot group comprised of one or more trail elements, said jackpot group being associated with a jackpot prize.

Claim 6 (original): A system according to Claim 5, wherein: said trail is comprised of seventeen elements (numbered 0 to 16), said non-prize winning group includes trail elements 0 to 3, said jackpot group includes trail element 16; and said prize winning groups comprise a first prize winning group including elements 4 to 7, a second prize winning group including elements 8 to 11, and a third prize winning group including elements 12 to 15.

Claim 7 (original): A system according to Claim 6, wherein the prize associated the jackpot group is more valuable than the prize associated with the third prize group, the prize associated with the third prize group is more valuable than the prize associated with the second prize group; and the prize associated with the second prize group is more valuable than the prize associated with the first prize group.

Claim 8 (currently amended): A system according to Claim 5 ~~any of Claims 5 to 7~~, wherein said jackpot comprises a fixed amount.

Claim 9 (currently amended): A system according to Claim 5 ~~any of Claims 5 to 7~~, wherein said jackpot comprises a progressive jackpot.

Claim 10 (currently amended): A system according to Claim 7 ~~any of Claims 7 to 9~~, wherein said prizes comprise a cash or credit amount.

Claim 11 (currently amended): A system according to Claim 1 ~~any preceding claim~~, wherein said determining means comprises means for generating, at least substantially at random, a number that corresponds to the trail element to which the punter could potentially progress in the course of playing the game.

Claim 12 (original): A system according to Claim 11, wherein said number generator is operable to generate a number from 0 to 16.

Claim 13 (currently amended): A system according to Claim 1 ~~any preceding claim~~, wherein a said game is sub-divided into a number of levels, and said controlling means comprises means for generating, at least substantially at random, a number that corresponds to the number of tasks to be provided for completion in the course of a level of the game.

Claim 14 (currently amended): A system according to Claim 13 ~~when dependent on any of Claims 3 to 11~~, wherein said groups of elements comprise at least one group which is not associated with a prize, and one or more prize winning groups that are each associated with a prize, and the number generator of the controlling means is configured, in an instance where the determining means has determined that the punter cannot progress beyond a trail element included within a non-prize winning group, to generate for each level a number which is less than the minimum number of tasks required to progress to a prize winning band.

Claim 15 (original): A system according to Claim 14, wherein the number generator is configured to generate a number from 0 to 3.

Claim 16 (currently amended): A system according to Claim 13 ~~when dependent on any of Claims 3 to 11~~, wherein said groups of elements comprise at least one group which is not associated with a prize, and one or more prize winning groups that are each associated with a prize, and the number generator of the controlling means is configured, in an instance where the determining means has determined that the punter could progress to an element included within a prize winning group, to ensure that the punter cannot progress by more than one prize winning group per level by generating a number which is less than the minimum number of tasks required to progress beyond the next successive prize winning group to a subsequent prize winning group.

Claim 17 (original): A system according to Claim 16, wherein the number generator is configured to generate a number from 0 to 7.

Claim 18 (currently amended): A system according to Claim 16~~and 17~~, wherein the number generator of the controlling means is configured, in the event that a punter has progressed to a trail element included within a group of trail elements that includes the element determined by the determining means as being the element to which the punter could potentially progress in the course of the game, to generate for each subsequent level a number which is less than the minimum number of tasks required to progress to the next prize winning group.

Claim 19 (original): A system according to Claim 18, wherein the number generator is configured to generate a number from 0 to 3.

Claim 20 (currently amended): A system according to Claim 13 ~~any of Claims 13 to 19~~, wherein a punter is returned to the first element of a trail element group at the end of a level if said punter has not completed sufficient tasks to progress to the next trail element group.

Claim 21 (currently amended): A system according to Claim 1 ~~any preceding claim~~, wherein a said punter who has completed one or more tasks and has qualified for a said prize is provided with an opportunity to collect said prize.

Claim 22 (currently amended): A system according Claim 1 ~~to any preceding claim~~, implemented by means of a computing resource and a game server, interconnected by means of a communications network.

Claim 23 (original): A system according to Claim 22, wherein each of the computing resource and the game server include software operable, when executed in an execution environment, to implement one or more aspects of the functionality herein described.

Claim 24 (currently amended): A gaming system according to Claim 1 ~~any preceding claim~~ implemented in an arcade machine, an interactive television

system (terrestrial or satellite), a mobile telephone or portable digital assistant, or a gaming console.

Claim 25 (currently amended): A method of controlling a gaming system, the method comprising:

establishing a trail comprised of a succession of trail elements of which at least one or more are associated with a prize, progression from one element to another along said trail being dependent upon the completion of tasks by a punter in the course of playing a game;

determining, at the outset of a said game, the trail element to which the punter could progress in the course of playing the game; and

controlling the provision of tasks for completion by the punter in the course of the game, said controlling ~~means~~ step being configured to ensure that the punter is not provided with a number of tasks that, if completed, would enable the punter to progress to a trail element beyond that which the punter has been predetermined by ~~said determining means~~ to attain by said determining step.

Claim 26 (currently amended): Computer program ~~means~~ embedded in a storage medium and comprising one or more software portions which, when executed in an execution environment, are operable to implement ~~the steps of Claim 25~~ the following steps:

establishing a trail comprised of a succession of trail elements of which at least one or more are associated with a prize, progression from one element to another along said trail being dependent upon the completion of tasks by a punter in the course of playing a game;

determining, at the outset of a said game, the trail element to which the punter could progress in the course of playing the game; and

controlling the provision of tasks for completion by the punter in the course of the game, said controlling step being configured to ensure that the punter is not provided with a number of tasks that, if completed, would enable the punter to progress to a trail element beyond that which the punter has been predetermined to attain by said determining step.